

For immediate release
May 15, 2002

Contact: Tricia Pummill, Deputy District Attorney
(619) 531-4070

Company That Packaged Propane Canisters
During Y2K Scare Fined for Shortfilling

A propane company that was the sole contractor for Blue Rhino Propane was fined by a Superior Court judge for selling propane canisters that did not contain the amount of propane indicated on the package label. Mr. Propane, Inc., a California corporation, was ordered to pay a total of \$35,185 in penalties and costs in a law enforcement action brought by San Diego District Attorney Paul J. Pfingst's Economic Fraud and Environmental Protection Division. The judge also permanently enjoined the company from committing future similar violations.

The District Attorney's Office filed a civil complaint with the San Diego Superior Court alleging that Mr. Propane falsely advertised that Blue Rhino propane gas cylinders distributed in San Diego County contained more propane by weight than they actually contained. The Complaint also alleged the company violated California's Weights and Measures laws. Weights and Measures officials in San Diego County discovered the violations in late December 1999, when propane sales were brisk due to concerns about Y2K. Inspectors immediately removed the shortfilled canisters from sale.

The propane canisters were the size usually used for barbecue grills. They were labeled as containing 17.5 pounds of propane. The amount of penalties was based in part on the amount consumers were overcharged. The County of San Diego Dept. of Agriculture, Weights and Measures Division conducts regular inspections to ensure that consumer goods are properly labeled.